The University of Chicago

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN DEPRESSION

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1941

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MARGARET M. HERDMAN

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THE LIBRARY QUARTERLY, Vol. XIII, October, 1943

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BETWEEN the years 1930 and 1935 the public libraries of the United States reacted somewhat uniformly to the combined influences of smaller appropriations and larger demands. A description of the nature and varying extent of this response should aid the administrator with his perennial problem of extracting the maximum services from any appropriation. A knowledge of the effect of various economies in expenditures for books, salaries, maintenance, and other essentials on the service to the community should help to prepare the profession for the lean years which some responsible prophets see ahead.

This study is concerned with describing certain aspects of the public libraries' response to the more typical influences of economic depression. The description is based primarily on data supplied by 150 libraries reporting throughout the period 1930–35. The libraries represent all regions of the country and all sizes of libraries. Equal representation has been achieved in part by selective sampling, and the sample agrees closely enough with other available samples to justify confidence in the findings.

The data were secured from two schedules submitted by the Graduate Library School in 1932 and in 1936 to a selected list of public libraries. The returns were supplemented by data gathered through correspondence with libraries, from the files of the Graduate Library School, and from library reports, government documents, the reports of special boards and surveys, and professional literature.

The data are grouped by volume size, city size, and region. By volume size there are four groups, ranging from 10,000 volumes and under to 200,000 volumes and over. There are eight groups by size of community population, from 2,500 and under to 500,000 and over. The grouping by five regions is used for comparison with other regional changes. The Mountain region is omitted from regional descriptions because of the small number of libraries included in the sample. The Chicago Public Library is omitted from the Middle West, and the District of Columbia Public Library is omitted from the South, because the large size of these libraries imposes their depression patterns, which are not typical, upon the group.

The comparisons are shown by index numbers, based on the year 1930, for expenditures and circulation and are shown by the percentages of the totals for different classes of expenditures and circulation. Index numbers and expenditure and circulation percentages of totals, except where specifically indicated by date, are the average of the indices and percentages of the four volume-size groups. The three-month recorded circulations are used in calculating the percentages of the total circulation composed of different classes of books.

The onset of the depression is usually dated from the fall of 1929. But the depression was not felt by many cities until 1931, the date of the international slump; and the stock market did not reach its

[1] The essential portion of a dissertation submitted to the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago in March, 1941, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

lowest points until 1932 and 1933. The period 1930–35 is here chosen for study because municipal institutions did not begin reducing budgets generally until 1931. Selection of 1935 as the terminal year of the study by no means implies that this year marks the end of the depression. But 1935 does show a definite and general improvement in library expenditures as well as in expenditures for other community institutions.

One report on the library during depression has already been made.[2] It was concerned with certain effects of reduced expenditures upon the public library and with the economies effected by the library. A description of library service during the depression in 140 village-centered, rural communities is given in *Rural Trends in Depression Years*,[3] and a brief description of one library appears in *Middletown in Transition*.[4]

A description of the public library may properly include some account of its service to the community. Without attempting to evaluate such service, we may describe certain changes in the library resulting from its efforts to meet larger demands with less money. The library contributes differently to different communities; but, under any conditions, the library as a municipal institution meets certain usual demands, as do other municipal institutions. The degree to which the demands are met depends essentially upon the general prosperity.

The first topic to be discussed in this study is variations in library circulation. The next deals with expenditures. Following that, the relation of library expenditures to circulation is described. Next, certain influences of the economic and social changes of the period upon the library are suggested. Finally, some implications for the library administrator are summarized.

[2] Douglas Waples, Leon Carnovsky, and William M. Randall, "The Public Library in the Depression," *Library Quarterly*, II (1932), 321–43.

[3] Edmund deS. Brunner and Irving Lorge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), pp. 204–14.

[4] Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937), pp. 252–57, 569–72.

LIBRARY CIRCULATION

The factors which increase and decrease library circulation are as complex and varied as are library book collections, the people who use libraries and those who administer them, and the communities which the libraries serve. To isolate any one factor to which a certain increase of circulation could be attributed would be difficult and unsafe. Seldom could the change be ascribed to only one factor, for in circulation all factors combine. It is one way, however, to describe what happened to library book circulation during depression. This section presents only a few basic facts, summarized by six major generalizations.

1. *Total library circulation was higher in 1935 than in 1930; 1932 and 1933 were peak years.*—As shown by the index numbers in Table 1, this generalization holds for all regions and all city-size groups, with the single exception of cities of 500,000 and over. It holds also for all five geographic regions. One should note that, in this table and elsewhere throughout the study, 1930 is the base year, with an index of 100. Changes for subsequent years are made by adding to or subtracting from 100 the percentage of increase or decrease. In general, the public libraries throughout the country loaned more books during this period than during any previous five-year period. In the 150 libraries studied, the increase in total circulation was most marked during the years 1932 and 1933. Circulation

reached a peak in the smallest and largest cities during 1932 and in other cities during 1933. It is hard to say how much of this difference is due to the fact that the fiscal year of many libraries begins in the spring or in the fall rather than in January, and how much is due to the date of the actual increase in circulation in the different localities. Other aspects

TABLE 1

TOTAL CIRCULATION INDEX OF LIBRARIES BY CITY SIZE AND BY REGION FOR THE YEARS 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930 = 100)

	TOTAL CIRCULATION INDEX				
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
By city size:					
2,500 and under....	115	121	116	111	103
2,500– 5,000.....	114	126	137	126	124
5,000– 10,000.....	113	127	135	126	120
10,000– 25,000.....	114	131	137	129	123
25,000– 50,000.....	114	128	137	131	126
50,000–100,000.....	114	131	156	139	128
100,000–500,000.....	116	142	126	121	118
500,000 and over.....	110	115	104	96	93
Total.....	113	127	127	118	114
By region:					
New England.....	112	125	126	118	113
Middle Atlantic.....	110	122	115	106	103
Middle West.....	109	117	116	112	110
South.....	115	132	131	123	120
Pacific.....	109	121	125	119	112

of the depression noted later suggest that the peaks of library circulation were more pronounced wherever the economic collapse was earliest and most far-reaching.

After the years 1932–33 total circulation decreased in most libraries. Rarely, however, did the circulation decline enough to offset the initial gain. The gain in total circulation in 1935 is not fully explained by increase in population, since population increased 4 per cent between 1930 and 1935, whereas circulation increased 14 per cent (see Table 1).

In three of the five regions the largest circulation occurred in 1932. These were the Middle Atlantic, the Middle West, and the South. The difference in amount of circulation in 1932 and 1933 in two of these regions, the Middle West and the South, is small. In two regions, New England and the Pacific, the largest circulation occurred in 1933. The two regions with the smallest increase in public library circulation, the Middle Atlantic and the Middle West, are those in which relatively large increases in number of school libraries and in book stocks of school libraries were reported for 1934.[5] Such increases may go far to explain the relatively small circulation of the public libraries in these regions. The South, which shows the largest relative increase in circulation in 1935, increased most in population.[6]

The definite tendency toward a general increase in total library circulation is thus apparent. But probably more important than changes in total circulation are the shifts in the component parts of library circulation; for example, adult and juvenile circulation and the circulation of fiction and nonfiction. The facts regarding such shifts appear in this section. Table 2 shows the shifts by means of index numbers, which support the following discussion.

2. *Between 1930 and 1935 adult circulation increased and juvenile circulation declined.*—In all regions except the Pacific the public library circulated fewer books to children in 1935 than in 1930. Two conditions doubtless contributed to

[5] U.S. Bureau of Education, *Biennial Survey of Education, 1928–30* (Washington: Government Printing Office), II, 776–77, Table 52; "Public High Schools, 1933–34," *Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, 1932–34*, chap. v, p. 75, Table 53.

[6] Between 1930 and 1940 for this sample the increase was 17 per cent.

this decline in juvenile circulation. First, there was the small but definite decrease of 1.76 per cent in the number of children enrolled in elementary schools between 1931 and 1934.[7] Second, elementary-school libraries during this period were increasing in number and in the size of their book collections.[8] Thus, not only was the number of children declining, but their book needs were being met by more and better school libraries.

A corollary to the decline in juvenile circulation is the smaller ratio of juvenile circulation to total circulation (see Table 3). In all five regions the percentage of circulation which was juvenile declined; in all regions except the Pacific this decline was sharp. The ratio of the juvenile to the total circulation is lower in the Pacific than in any other of the five regions. This region has about 16 per cent fewer children five to seventeen years of age in the total population than any other region.[9] The school libraries in this region are good and have been good for many years.

The ratio of adult circulation to total circulation is largest in the two regions having the highest proportion of their

TABLE 2

ADULT FICTION AND NONFICTION AND JUVENILE FICTION AND NONFICTION INDICES BY REGION FOR THE YEARS 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930=100)

REGION AND TYPE OF CIRCULATION	CIRCULATION INDEX				
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
New England:					
Adult fiction	116	137	149	134	126
Adult nonfiction	109	124	145	134	139
Juvenile fiction	111	116	111	102	98
Juvenile nonfiction	110	121	104	90	94
Total	112	125	126	118	113
Middle Atlantic:					
Adult fiction	114	130	131	116	107
Adult nonfiction	109	133	127	121	120
Juvenile fiction	114	118	114	102	94
Juvenile nonfiction	107	110	89	79	74
Total	110	122	115	106	103
Middle West:					
Adult fiction	117	138	135	127	122
Adult nonfiction	114	132	134	129	133
Juvenile fiction	111	114	100	94	94
Juvenile nonfiction	108	115	103	102	104
Total	109	117	116	112	110
South:					
Adult fiction	112	132	137	115	109
Adult nonfiction	120	131	129	125	121
Juvenile fiction	121	136	104	94	94
Juvenile nonfiction	134	131	104	98	99
Total	115	132	131	123	120
Pacific:					
Adult fiction	116	130	132	121	110
Adult nonfiction	115	134	163	148	154
Juvenile fiction	112	110	127	123	118
Juvenile nonfiction	106	108	127	130	119
Total	109	121	125	119	112
All regions:					
Adult fiction	114	135	136	123	115
Adult nonfiction	116	141	142	132	132
Juvenile fiction	110	116	107	100	96
Juvenile nonfiction	108	120	113	105	99
Total	113	127	127	118	114

TABLE 3

JUVENILE CIRCULATION SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CIRCULATION BY REGION FOR THE YEARS 1930 AND 1935

Region	1930	1935
New England	41.58	34.52
Middle Atlantic	37.21	32.21
Middle West	42.67	36.89
South	37.09	33.39
Pacific	32.23	31.78

[7] U.S. Bureau of Education, "Statistics of State School Systems," *Biennial Survey of Education in the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1931–32, Table 4; 1933–34, Table 5.

[8] Edith A. Lathrop, "School Library Service," in U.S. Office of Education, *Development in Educational Method, 1934–36* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1936), p. 47.

[9] U.S. Bureau of Education, "Statistics of State School Systems."

population over seventeen years of age—the Pacific and the Atlantic[10]—and in the South, where children's libraries are poor and few in number.

By 1935 adult fiction circulation had increased in the different regions from 7 to 26 per cent over 1930, and adult nonfiction had increased from 20 to 54 per cent. Table 2 shows the variations in adult fiction and nonfiction circulation which are discussed in the following section.

TABLE 4

ADULT FICTION AND NONFICTION CIRCULATION SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CIRCULATION BY REGION FOR 1931–35

REGION	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CIRCULATION				
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
New England:					
Adult fiction	44.05	46.21	48.69	48.55	46.86
Adult nonfiction	15.03	15.11	17.12	17.49	18.60
Middle Atlantic:					
Adult fiction	41.80	42.58	43.85	43.06	42.15
Adult nonfiction	21.68	23.69	23.09	24.46	25.03
Middle West:					
Adult fiction	39.03	41.32	42.36	41.76	40.40
Adult nonfiction	19.62	20.26	21.61	21.82	22.70
South:					
Adult fiction	41.79	44.10	49.28	46.54	45.41
Adult nonfiction	18.70	18.40	19.45	21.06	21.20
Pacific:					
Adult fiction	51.25	52.79	49.13	47.90	45.98
Adult nonfiction	17.52	18.78	20.75	20.19	22.21

3. *Circulation of adult nonfiction increased relatively more than the circulation of adult fiction.*—Both adult nonfiction and fiction circulation reached peaks in the years 1932–33. Afterward the circulation of adult fiction decreased regularly to 1935 in most libraries, while adult nonfiction circulation decreased and then increased again.

Increase in population is not the only reason for increase in total library circulation, but it does explain the increase in individual libraries. It also explains the increase and variation in circulation in some of the regions. In the Pacific region, for example, with its larger educational and cultural interests, increase of population[11] helps to explain the increase in total circulation and the large increase in adult nonfiction circulation.[12] In the South, where population had its greatest increase,[13] the increase in population goes far to explain the increase in total circulation but does not explain the increase in adult nonfiction, for the library in this section is the traditional source of literature and fiction.[14] In New England, the Middle Atlantic, and the Middle West the population increase has far less to do with the regional variations.

Another way of describing the increase in adult nonfiction circulation is to say that the ratio of adult nonfiction to total circulation increased steadily throughout the period 1930–35. This is necessarily true since, as we have seen, juvenile circulation declined and adult nonfiction increased more than adult fiction. The percentages of adult nonfiction circulation are shown by years and by regions in Table 4. With few exceptions, one notes the steady increase in the nonfiction percentage. The highest proportions of adult nonfiction circulation throughout the depression period are always found in the Middle Atlantic and the Middle West, and the lowest in New England.

An even more striking variation in the ratio of adult nonfiction circulation to

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] In the library sample the population of the Pacific region in 1930 was 176,086; in 1940 it was 196,087—an index of 112.

[12] Louis R. Wilson, *The Geography of Reading* (Chicago: American Library Association and University of Chicago Press, 1938), pp. 290–321.

[13] In the library sample the population of the South in 1930 was 653,059; in 1940 it was 766,029—an index of 117.

[14] Louis R. Wilson and Edward A. Wight, *County Library Service in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 203.

total circulation appears when the data are classed by library-size groups. Table 5 shows a definite and marked increase in the percentage of adult nonfiction circulated as the libraries increase in size. In the libraries of over 200,000 volumes the adult nonfiction proportion is 77 per cent greater than in the libraries with under 10,000 volumes. Yet, as Table 5 shows, the index numbers for adult nonfiction circulation increased much more rapidly between 1930 and 1935 than the indices for adult fiction in all size groups.

TABLE 5

ADULT FICTION AND NONFICTION CIRCULATION INDEX AND ADULT NONFICTION PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BY SIZE OF LIBRARY FOR 1935

(Base Year, 1930=100)

Library Size in Volumes	Adult Fiction Index	Adult Nonfiction Index	Adult Nonfiction Percentage of Total
10,000 and under..	115	135	14.05
10,000– 50,000....	118	139	18.18
50,000–200,000....	121	134	21.68
200,000 and over...	104	119	24.82

It is evident that nonfiction books were in relatively greater demand not only where they were most abundant but also where the effects of the depression were most far-reaching—that is, in the larger libraries of the larger cities. The larger city also stimulates nonfiction readers by virtue of its wider and richer contacts with ideas; its library collections more nearly cover the serious interests of its readers, and its crowded high-school and college libraries are inadequate for students. Also, the larger city supplies fiction from so many sources other than the public library that the demands upon the library for fiction are proportionately reduced.

Unlike circulation to adults, circulation to children shows very little variation, as will be seen by referring again to Table 2.

4. *No definite circulation trends are discernible in the ratio of juvenile fiction to juvenile nonfiction.*—In general, both types of juvenile circulation decline in all regions except the Pacific, in which both juvenile fiction and nonfiction increased, and the Middle West, in which juvenile nonfiction increased. Table 6 shows that this generalization also fits all library-size groups, except the group of 10,000 volumes and under, in which juvenile nonfiction increased, and the group of 10,000–50,000 volumes, in which juvenile fiction did not decrease. These facts suggest that the decline in juvenile circulation from the public library, as already pointed out, results from the organization of elementary-school libraries as well as from the declining population of this age group.

TABLE 6

JUVENILE FICTION AND NONFICTION CIRCULATION SHOWING PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL AND INDEX BY SIZE OF LIBRARY FOR 1930 AND 1935

(Base Year, 1930=100)

Library Size in Volumes	1930		1935	
	Percentage of Total	Index	Percentage of Total	Index
10,000 and under:				
Juvenile fiction.....	28.87	100	24.58	95
Juvenile nonfiction.....	8.15	100	8.20	112
10,000–50,000:				
Juvenile fiction.....	23.80	100	20.99	101
Juvenile nonfiction.....	13.85	100	11.83	98
50,000–200,000:				
Juvenile fiction.....	21.74	100	18.66	98
Juvenile nonfiction.....	14.52	100	12.07	95
200,000 and over:				
Juvenile fiction.....	20.91	100	18.52	91
Juvenile nonfiction.....	18.53	100	16.93	94

As library circulation is a product of library borrowers, it is pertinent to this study to discover the changes, if any, in numbers of library borrowers. Table 7 shows the index numbers for these changes.

5. *The number of library borrowers increased in 1930–35.*—This generalization applies to all library-size groups and all regions. In the two smallest size groups the borrowers increased steadily in number to 1935. In libraries of over 200,000 volumes the increase in borrowers over 1930 (18 per cent) in 1933 was twice as large as it was in 1935.

TABLE 7

TOTAL BORROWERS INDEX BY VOLUME SIZE AND BY REGION FOR THE YEARS 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930=100)

	TOTAL BORROWERS INDEX				
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
By volume size:					
10,000 and under	112	125	125	131	134
10,000– 50,000	106	114	116	119	124
50,000–200,000	110	117	118	117	117
200,000 and over	109	115	118	115	109
By region:					
New England	116	149	116	111	113
Middle Atlantic	114	124	132	127	117
Middle West	106	111	111	112	112
South	115	130	125	126	125
Pacific	102	103	106	104	108

By 1935 borrowers had increased most in the smallest libraries and least in the largest, with a regular decrease in the size of the index numbers from smallest to largest libraries. The evidence shows that the percentage of the population registered as library borrowers is highest in the small cities and lowest in the large cities. For example, in 1935 the number of registered borrowers in libraries of less than 10,000 volumes was 54 per cent of the population; in libraries of over 200,000 volumes it was only 23 per cent of the population. In the size group of 50,000–200,000 volumes the proportion of registered borrowers to population was 34 per cent. It is reasonable to suggest that the lower proportion of registered borrowers in the larger cities is related to the greater availability of free and inexpensive entertainment and recreation.

Among the geographic regions, borrowers increased most in the South and least in the Pacific, where, however, they had a steady gain. In the Middle West, too, there was a steady gain. In the South and in New England borrowers were more numerous in 1932 than in any other year. In the Middle Atlantic the index reached a peak in 1933. The method of keeping borrowers' records is so unstandardized that it is rather hazardous to impute any statistical significance to these differences, but they might well reflect differences in unemployment and population increases. They apparently conform to variations and increases in the proportions of children five to seventeen years of age in the population.

TABLE 8

TOTAL VOLUMES INDEX BY SIZE OF LIBRARY FOR 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930=100)

LIBRARY SIZE IN VOLUMES	TOTAL VOLUMES INDEX				
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
10,000 and under	100	103	106	108	111
10,000– 50,000	105	109	112	114	117
50,000–200,000	106	111	115	117	120
200,000 and over	105	107	107	108	110

Book stock is another factor upon which library circulation depends. The available data make it possible to discuss only the changes in total holdings, which are shown by the index numbers of Table 8.

6. *The book stocks of public libraries increased regularly from 1930 to 1935.*—In all library-size groups and in all regions the number of volumes increased regularly during the period. The number of volumes increased the least (6 per cent) in New England and the most (20 per cent) in the Pacific. In library-size groups the greatest increase for the five-year period was in the book stock of libraries of 50,000–200,000 volumes (20 per cent) and the smallest increase was in the stocks of the libraries of 200,000 volumes or more (10 per cent). One would naturally expect the differences to be explained by the varying proportions of expenditures for books, and this is later shown to be true.

Summary.—The noteworthy facts about public library circulation during the depression are briefly summarized in graphic form in Figures 1–8, which plot the rise and fall of circulation and other measures noted in this section. Each figure takes 1930 as a base of 100 and shows percentage variations from the base from year to year. The figures are for the entire sample of 150 libraries.

Throughout the period the number of books added to the libraries exceeded the number withdrawn, but this growing total book stock did not carry circulation continuously upward with it.

The number of borrowers increased 20 per cent between 1930 and 1932 and then held its own with a loss of only 1 per cent for the next three years. Clearly, libraries gained many new patrons during the depression, although the average borrower read fewer books per year in 1935 than he did in 1930.

A glance at Figures 1–5 shows that the general pattern for total circulation and for the various subdivisions of circulation is roughly similar. There is a rapid rise to a peak in 1932–33, followed by a steady decline. The rise is greatest and the decline smallest in the case of adult nonfiction circulation (see Fig. 3). Conversely, the rise is smallest and the decline most pronounced for the circulation of juvenile fiction and nonfiction (see Figs. 4 and 5). In both the juvenile groups the 1935 figure is smaller than that for 1930; these are the only instances in which there was an absolute decline in circulation over the whole period.

Finally, it is useful to compare the upward trends in the library circulation with the diminishing curve for library expenditures in Figure 8. Total expenditures increased very slightly for one year and then plunged rapidly downward for two years, after which there was a small recovery in 1934 and 1935. Comparison of the expenditure curve with the various circulation curves shows a lag in the effect of expenditures on circulation. Circulation did not begin to decline until a year or two after expenditures began to rise.[15] Variations in library expenditures will be considered in detail in the next section, and the relations between expenditures and circulation in the section following.

LIBRARY EXPENDITURES

Description of the library's finances is important because these variations generally explain other changes in the library's operation—particularly changes in circulation. The basic changes during the depression in total library expenditures and in the five subdivisions of expenditures (salaries, books, periodicals, binding, and miscellaneous) will be described under five main generalizations

[15] Cf. similar trends in Chicago, as shown by Carleton B. Joeckel and Leon Carnovsky, *A Metropolitan Library in Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), pp. 110–13.

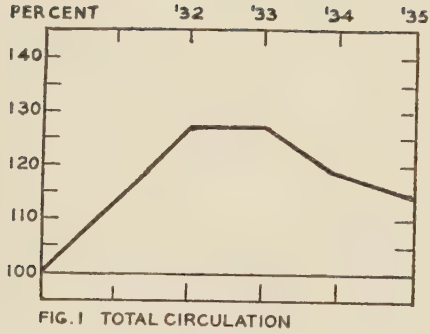

FIG. 1 TOTAL CIRCULATION

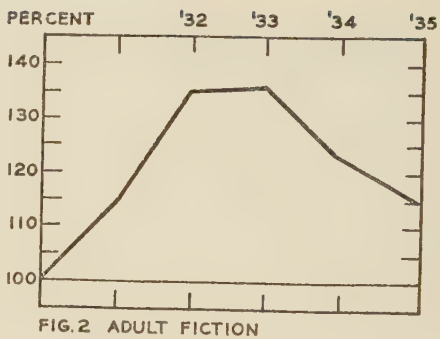

FIG. 2 ADULT FICTION

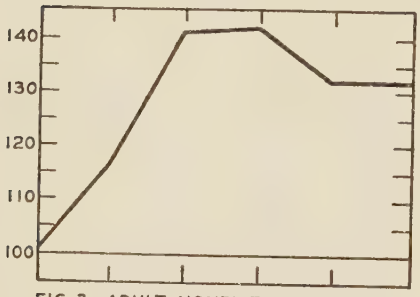

FIG. 3 ADULT NONFICTION

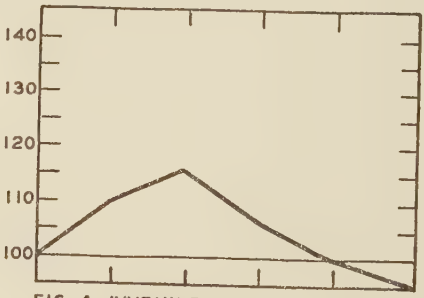

FIG. 4 JUVENILE FICTION

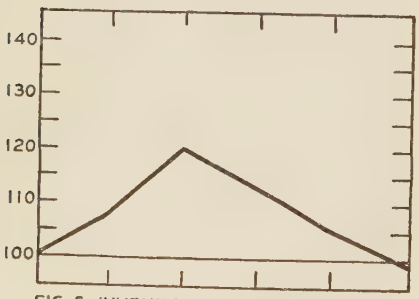

FIG. 5 JUVENILE NONFICTION

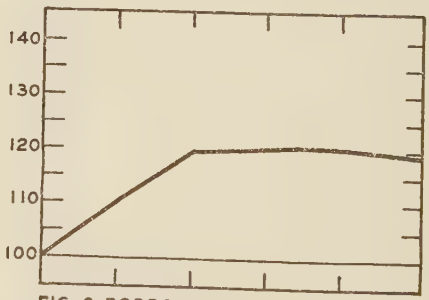

FIG. 6 BORROWERS

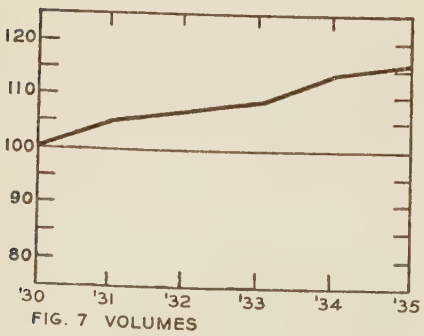

FIG. 7 VOLUMES

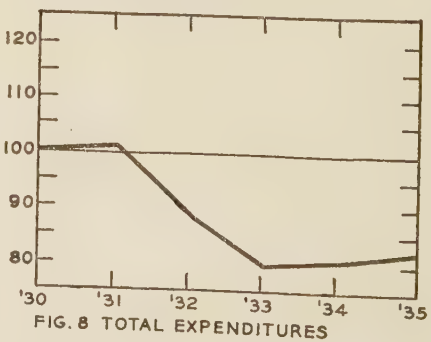

FIG. 8 TOTAL EXPENDITURES

FIGS. 1–8.—Public library circulation, 1930–35 (base year, 1930=100)

in this section. The index numbers for total expenditures are shown in Table 9.

1. *Total library expenditures were lower in 1935 than in 1930, but the low of the depression came in 1933 and 1934.*—Unlike library circulation, which increased during the period, library expenditures declined 17 per cent between 1930 and 1935, but they were still less in 1933 and 1934, when they dropped to 20 and 19 per cent below 1930. This reduction followed the reduction in national income, which had been declining since 1929. In 1933 and 1934 the national income was 39 and 30 per cent, respectively, less than it had been in 1930. In 1932, when library expenditures were reduced by only 9 per cent, national income had already experienced a 36 per cent reduction.[16]

In 1933–34, when expenditures of libraries were generally lowest, the expenditures of regions ranged from 69 per cent of 1930 in the South to 86 per cent of 1930 in the Middle Atlantic. Averaged for the five-year period 1931–35, we find that the three regions[17] with the highest per capita general income maintain the highest comparative expenditures for the library. These regions are the Middle Atlantic, New England,[18] and the Pacific. During this period the tax revenues of the Middle Atlantic also had the lowest decrease of all regions. Of the different size groups the medium-sized libraries with 50,000–200,000 volumes maintained the highest relative expenditures. The reduction in 1935 for expenditures in this group was only 13 per cent, and averaged for the five years it was only 11 per cent. The explanation for the financial superiority is probably a natural one. All sizes of municipalities by 1935 were struggling against much the same difficulties of economic deterioration, though in the smallest and largest communities the pinch was most acute. This group of libraries of 50,000–200,000 volumes, in addition to being in communities which felt the pinch of depression less, are in the size of community which, generally speaking, takes most interest in and supports most intelligently all community and educational enterprises.

TABLE 9

TOTAL-EXPENDITURES INDEX BY REGION AND BY VOLUME SIZE FOR THE YEARS 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930=100)

	TOTAL-EXPENDITURES INDEX					
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	Average
By volume size:						
New England	89	82	73	75	77	79
Middle Atlantic	103	103	86	83	86	93
Middle West	100	79	73	80	82	83
South	105	81	69	71	77	81
Pacific	104	97	82	81	84	90
Total	101	90	80	81	83	87
By region:						
10,000 and under	97	86	80	84	81	86
10,000– 50,000	101	88	77	79	81	85
50,000–200,000	102	95	82	82	87	89
200,000 and over	102	89	80	79	83	87

While library budgets were generally reduced during the period 1930–35, it is important to note that in 1931 expenditures were increased from 3 to 5 per cent in three regions—the Middle Atlantic, the Pacific, and the South—and were not reduced in the Middle West. In all library-size groups expenditures were increased from 1 to 2 per cent in 1931, with the exception of the smallest group with under 10,000 volumes.

When reduction of expenditures became a necessity, librarians were faced

[16] Robert F. Martin, *National Income and Its Elements* (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1936), p. 10, Chart I.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 48, Table 25; p. 51, Table 27.

[18] When 5 libraries, each with total expenditures under 80 per cent in 1935 and averaging 67 per cent, are omitted from the sample of 19 libraries for New England, of the remaining 14 libraries expenditures of each are above 80, in 1935, with an average of 94 per cent.

with the problem of deciding what changes to make in the relative proportions of different items of expenditure. The rest of this section will be concerned principally with the discussion of the relative changes made in the major expenditure categories: salaries, books, periodicals, binding, and miscellaneous maintenance expenditures. Reductions in salary expenditures of the various regions and library sizes are shown by index numbers in Table 10.

TABLE 10

SALARY-EXPENDITURES INDEX BY REGION AND BY VOLUME SIZE FOR THE YEARS 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930 = 100)

	Salary-Expenditures Index				
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
By region:					
New England	102	94	85	87	88
Middle Atlantic	106	99	96	92	94
Middle West	102	86	81	82	86
South	103	88	73	75	79
Pacific	106	102	95	93	96
Total	103	95	89	87	90
By volume size:					
10,000 and under	102	95	91	89	89
10,000– 50,000	103	96	87	87	90
50,000–200,000	103	97	88	85	90
200,000 and over	104	92	88	86	89

2. *Salary expenditures declined from 1930 to 1935 but declined less sharply than total expenditures.*—This generalization is true of all regions and size groups. The first observation to be made regarding the salary indices shown in Table 10 is that the economic ability of the various regions is reflected in the salary expenditures of their libraries. Thus the regions with highest per capita income—the Middle Atlantic, New England, and the Pacific—reduced salary expenditures in libraries least. When the index numbers are considered by library-size groups, a high degree of consistency in the proportionate decreases in salary payments is noted. For 1935 the range in the salary index for the four size groups is only 89–90. By 1935 salary expenditures in the total sample of 150 libraries had been restored to 90 per cent of the 1930 base. Nineteen per cent of the individual libraries did not reduce salaries. These libraries are represented in the different size groups in the following proportions: 29 per cent of those of 10,000 volumes and under, 21 per cent of those of 10,000–50,000 volumes, 13 per cent of those of 50,000–200,000 volumes, and only one library of those of over 200,000 volumes. It is readily understood why the fewest salary cuts were made in the smallest libraries. With salary expenditures of around $1,000 or less, to reduce salaries means practically to close the library.

3. *Book expenditures declined relatively more between 1930 and 1935 than salary expenditures and total expenditures.*—This was true in all regions and size groups, as shown in Table 11. Decreases in book expenditures began in some regions and some library-size groups in 1931. By 1932 reductions were universal in all groups. In 1933 book expenditures reached their depression low and were only 54 per cent of their 1930 basis. Moreover, book expenditures were much less elastic in their rebound toward the predepression norm. In other words, reductions for books were more severe, and recovery was much less in 1935 than for other expenditure categories. For all libraries in the sample of 150 the depression low indices for total expenditures, salary expenditures, and book expenditures were 80, 87, and 53, respectively; the corresponding 1935 indices were 83, 90, and 66. It is clear that a major readjustment in the proportions of library

budgets took place between 1930 and 1935 and that the book budget suffered most.

Like salary and total expenditures, book expenditures were lowest in 1933 and 1934 except in the Middle West. In this region, which had the greatest losses in income of all kinds, book and total expenditures were lowest in 1932–33.

It is a mathematical corollary to what has just been said that the proportion of total expenditures devoted to books in all library groups was reduced during the depression period and that the proportion devoted to salaries was increased. This is made clear by Table 12, in which the percentages of total expenditures devoted to books and salaries are shown by library-size groups. The percentages in this table, it should be remarked, are for books alone and do not include expenditures for periodicals and binding, which are considered in the next subdivision of this section. Book budgets in all size groups suffered materially, but in 1935 expenditures in the two smaller groups were more nearly restored to the 1930 ratio than were those in the two larger groups.

TABLE 11

BOOK-EXPENDITURES INDEX BY REGION AND BY VOLUME SIZE FOR THE YEARS 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930=100)

	Book-Expenditures Index				
	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
By region:					
New England	96	84	66	71	73
Middle Atlantic	100	89	45	42	53
Middle West	95	48	48	66	63
South	111	64	52	54	64
Pacific	103	71	40	43	46
Total	94	70	53	58	66
By volume size:					
10,000 and under	78	63	57	54	65
10,000– 50,000	96	73	54	63	71
50,000–200,000	100	79	59	62	68
200,000 and over	102	64	43	51	60

TABLE 12

BOOK AND SALARY PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES BY VOLUME SIZE FOR THE YEARS 1930–35

Library Size in Volumes	Percentage of Total Expenditures					
	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
	For Books					
10,000 and under	22.58	18.30	16.36	16.16	14.34	17.99
10,000– 50,000	20.91	20.05	17.33	14.75	16.74	18.29
50,000–200,000	20.21	19.83	17.08	14.61	15.42	15.74
200,000 and over	15.35	15.47	10.96	8.37	9.89	11.10
	For Salaries					
10,000 and under	43.68	46.04	48.08	49.62	46.29	47.69
10,000– 50,000	46.95	48.02	50.99	52.62	52.17	52.05
50,000–200,000	54.17	54.66	52.64	58.49	56.58	55.68
200,000 and over	59.79	61.33	61.66	65.63	64.87	63.89

Inspection of Table 12 also shows clearly that the relative proportion of expenditures devoted to salaries increases uniformly and materially with the size of the library group. Not quite so consistent, but generally evident, is the decrease in the proportion of book expenditures with the increase in the size of the libraries. The probable reasons for these facts seem fairly obvious. The smaller libraries require a larger proportion of their expenditures to build up satisfactory book collections, and salary scales are usually higher in the larger cities. This situation is not entirely new in depression times. It was generally true of library financial administration in the predepression period, but the distortions caused by forced reductions increased the differences already existing between the relative expenditures for salaries in the different size groups.

There were 25 individual libraries in the sample of 150 which did not reduce

TABLE 13

PERIODICAL- AND BINDING-EXPENDITURES INDICES AND PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES BY VOLUME SIZE FOR 1930–35

(Base Year, 1930 = 100)

VOLUME SIZE AND ITEM	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
	Periodicals					
10,000 and under:						
Index	100	102	90	87	74	93
Percentage	2.79	2.96	2.91	3.05	2.45	3.17
10,000–50,000:						
Index	100	103	91	87	87	92
Percentage	1.97	2.02	2.03	2.23	2.18	2.26
50,000–200,000:						
Index	100	104	99	84	93	94
Percentage	1.70	1.72	1.78	1.76	1.93	1.84
200,000 and over:						
Index	100	100	74	68	66	71
Percentage	1.08	1.06	0.89	0.92	0.90	0.93
	Binding					
10,000 and under:						
Index	100	83	63	71	83	74
Percentage	2.40	2.05	1.76	2.14	2.34	2.17
10,000–50,000:						
Index	100	105	84	78	85	81
Percentage	3.25	3.41	3.11	3.27	3.50	3.28
50,000–200,000:						
Index	100	107	97	86	89	101
Percentage	3.73	3.90	3.82	3.91	4.07	4.33
200,000 and over:						
Index	100	99	82	72	75	79
Percentage	5.44	5.29	5.03	4.93	5.18	5.19

their book expenditures proportionately more than their salary expenditures in the period. These 25 libraries classify in the size groups as follows: 5 in that under 10,000 volumes, 12 in that of 10,000–50,000 volumes, 8 in that of 50,000–200,000 volumes, and 1 in that of over 200,000 volumes.

During the depression period, reductions were made in all items of expenditure, no matter how small, but expenditures for periodicals and bindings were generally not reduced until 1932 and after. The index numbers for these reductions in periodical and binding expenditures are shown in Table 13.

TABLE 14

MISCELLANEOUS-MAINTENANCE-EXPENDITURES INDEX AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES BY VOLUME SIZE FOR 1930–35

LIBRARY SIZE IN VOLUMES	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
	Index					
10,000 and under	100	110	117	115	118	98
10,000– 50,000	100	103	99	88	88	92
50,000–200,000	100	102	101	92	92	100
200,000 and over	100	96	103	88	91	91
	Percentage					
10,000 and under	16.48	18.80	22.41	23.80	23.25	19.94
10,000– 50,000	16.64	17.09	18.81	18.99	18.78	18.96
50,000–200,000	12.53	12.54	13.46	14.08	14.12	14.31
200,000 and over	13.28	12.65	15.41	14.64	15.33	14.66

4. *Periodical and binding expenditures declined relatively less than book expenditures in the period.*—This was true of all size groups without exception. In the size group of 50,000–200,000 volumes expenditures for binding were slightly higher and those for periodicals were reduced but 6 per cent in 1935. Periodical expenditures were reduced most in the largest size group, where the necessity of making savings was most pressing. The percentage of total expenditures spent for periodicals also decreased only in the largest size group (as shown in Table 13) and increased in the other three groups. This shows that the relative expenditures for periodicals were better maintained in the smaller size groups. Table 13 supplies evidence for the fact that larger libraries spend relatively more for binding than smaller libraries, and relatively less for periodicals. The smallest reductions in any category were made by the library in expenditures for miscellaneous maintenance. Table 14 shows the index numbers for the comparative reductions in this item in the different size groups.

5. *Miscellaneous maintenance expenditures decreased less from 1930 to 1935 than any other item of expenditure.*—This was true in libraries in all size groups. The percentage of total expenditures spent for maintenance, however, increased in all size groups from 1930 to 1935. In the size group of 50,000–200,000 volumes maintenance expenditures were the same at the beginning and the end of the peri-

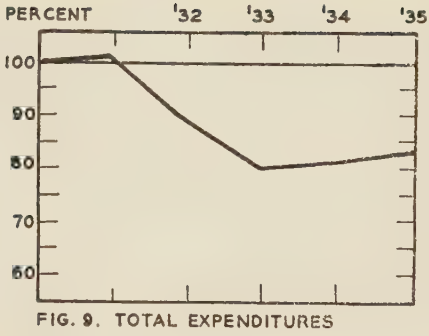

FIG. 9. TOTAL EXPENDITURES

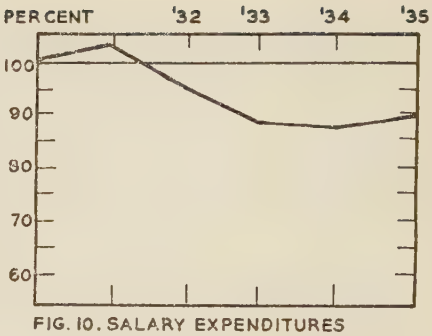

FIG. 10. SALARY EXPENDITURES

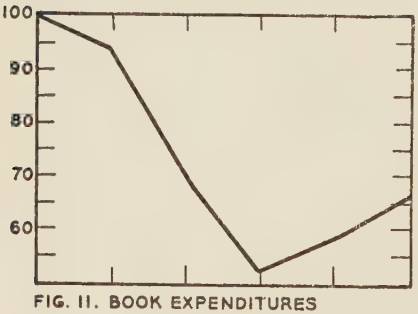

FIG. 11. BOOK EXPENDITURES

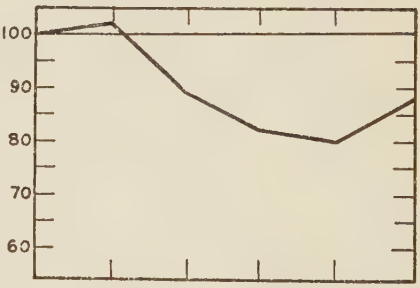

FIG. 12. PERIODICAL EXPENDITURES

FIG. 13. BINDING EXPENDITURES

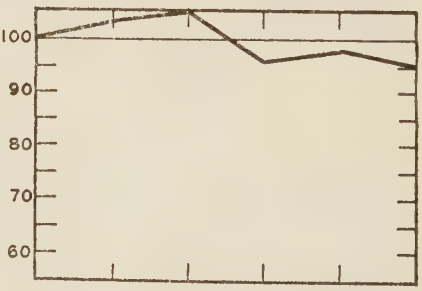

FIG. 14. MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURES

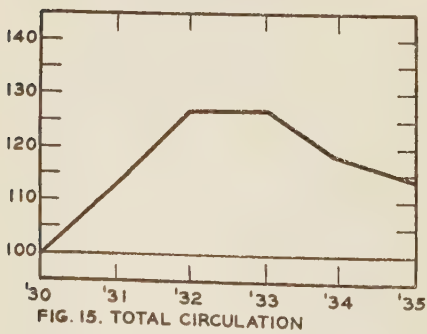

FIG. 15. TOTAL CIRCULATION

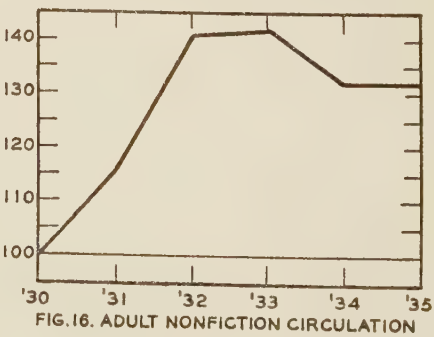

FIG. 16. ADULT NONFICTION CIRCULATION

FIGS. 9–16.—Public library expenditures, 1930–35 (base year, 1930=100)

od, and the percentage of total expenditures assigned to maintenance increased from 12.53 per cent to 14.31 per cent. It is readily understood how difficult it would be to reduce such an item, which covers rent of quarters, repairs and upkeep, janitor service, cleaning, light, etc., in a period of steadily increasing service. However, many individual libraries did decrease this item considerably. In 1931 libraries in all groups succeeded in reducing the proportion of the maintenance item, but the percentage rose again in all groups in succeeding years. The percentage of total expenditures assigned to maintenance is much lower in the two larger size groups than it is in the two smaller size groups.

Summary.—A graphic summary of the expenditures statistics included in this chapter is presented in Figures 9–14 (based on the index numbers of Table 15); and Figures 15 and 16 make possible a comparison between trends in circulation and expenditures. The data from which the graphs are derived include the whole group of 150 libraries used as a sample in this study.

The pattern shown by the curves is reasonably comparable for five of the measures of expenditures (total, salaries, books, periodicals, and binding)—a major decline followed by a minor rise in the last year or two of the depression period. In the case of salaries there was a small increase before the decline began and for total expenditures a very slight preliminary increase.

The decline in book expenditures was much the most severe, while that in salaries was less marked. At a time when libraries desperately needed books to meet new demands their book budgets were seriously crippled.

Expenditures for miscellaneous maintenance—rent, heat, light, janitor service, and the like—do not conform to the pattern for other expenditure categories. As a matter of fact, they varied less than 5 per cent up or down from the 1930 norm.

The extreme disparity between the decreasing financial resources of the library in depression and the increasing service given by the library to the community is very evident when these curves of declining expenditures are compared with the curves of increasing circulation.

TABLE 15

INDICES FOR ALL ITEMS OF EXPENDITURE, 1931–35

(Base Year, 1930=100)

Item	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Salaries	103	95	89	87	90
Books	94	70	53	58	66
Periodicals	102	89	82	80	88
Binding	99	84	78	83	84
Maintenance	103	105	96	97	95
Total	101	90	80	81	83

Again, it is evident that there is a lag in the relation between circulation and expenditure. Depression influences forced circulation upward at first, but circulation eventually declined as expenditures dropped and employment increased. In 1935 the circulation trend was still downward, although the expenditures were again moving upward.

CIRCULATION AND EXPENDITURES FOR BOOKS

What was the relation between library expenditures for books and library circulation during the depression period? Certain aspects of this question have been touched upon; it has been shown that there appeared to be a lag in the effect of declines in book expenditure on circulation. The present section will at-

tempt to carry the analysis somewhat further.

The circulation of books by public libraries proverbially depends upon the amount of money they spend (see Table 16). Administration of library expenditures, however, as indicated in the preceding section, shows some variations in opinion as to the relative importance of expenditures for salaries and books. The fact that circulation was better maintained during depression in those libraries which held book expenditures at relatively high averages will be shown in the following discussion.

TABLE 16

LIBRARY CIRCULATION AND EXPENDITURE AND BOOK EXPENDITURE BY REGION AND LIBRARY SIZE FOR 1930

	Average Three Months' Circulation	Average Expenditure	Average Book Expenditure
By region:			
New England	61,260	$ 35,172	$ 6,024
Middle Atlantic	271,012	164,239	28,265
Middle West	111,877	66,147	11,820
South	63,427	31,908	6,694
Pacific	46,776	21,008	4,970
By volume size:			
10,000 and under	7,773	2,579	583
10,000– 50,000	26,367	12,529	1,917
50,000–200,000	86,070	44,128	7,116
200,000 and over	1,240,273	779,869	76,275

Circulation varies more closely with book expenditures than with salary expenditures. The Pearson coefficient of correlation between the circulation index and the proportion of expenditures spent for salaries for the sample of 142 libraries used in Tables 17 and 18 is $-.35 \pm .050$, while the coefficient of correlation between the circulation index and the proportion of expenditures spent for books is $+.44 \pm .046$. Between circulation index and expenditure index it is $+.25 \pm .053$.

Correlation between circulation and book expenditures.—An analysis of the records of the libraries shows a generally close correspondence between amounts spent for books and circulation. This is made clear by examination of Tables 17 and 18. Table 17 shows that libraries with the highest percentage of book expenditures had the highest circulation indices during the period 1930–35. Similarly, the higher the circulation indices, the higher the book expenditures, as seen in Table 18. In other words, those libraries which spent relatively larger proportions of their total expenditures for books had relatively higher increases in circulation, which indicates that these libraries were better stocked with current reading materials which were in demand by borrowers.

TABLE 17

CIRCULATION AND BOOK EXPENDITURES, SHOWING RELATION OF INCREASE IN CIRCULATION INDEX, 1931–35, TO BOOK PERCENTAGE, 1930–35*

(Base Year, 1930 = 100)

ITEM	PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURES FOR BOOKS		
	Above 20	20–15	Below 15
Circulation index	128	124	115
Number of libraries	42	49	51

* Eight atypical cases omitted.

But during the period 1930–35 practically all libraries reduced expenditures while circulation was increasing; and of necessity the comparison between circulation and expenditures for books must be between relative increases in circulation and relative reductions in book expenditures. Table 18 shows that circulation increased more in those libraries which reduced their book expenditures the least during the period 1930–35. The

libraries which more nearly maintained predepression levels of book expenditures were able to replenish their book stock with relatively more current titles in demand.

The regional and volume-size groups with the lowest percentages of book expenditures to total expenditures had the lowest circulation indices in 1935 (see Table 19). These were the Middle Atlantic region and the size group with over 200,000 volumes.

TABLE 18

CIRCULATION AND BOOK EXPENDITURES, SHOWING RELATION OF BOOK-EXPENDITURES INDEX TO INCREASE IN CIRCULATION INDEX, 1931–35*

(Base Year, 1930=100)

ITEM	CIRCULATION INDEX, 1935			
	Above 150	150–125	125–100	Below 100
Book-expenditure index	94	89	78	68
Number of libraries	13	30	69	30

* Eight atypical cases omitted.

Perhaps the foregoing tables contain sufficient evidence of the general fact that those libraries which maintained their percentages of expenditures for books at high levels during the depression period showed the largest increases in circulation. This correspondence is made clearer, however, and more specific when pertinent data for all the libraries in the sample are tabulated in detail.

A rank-order tabulation, arranging the 150 libraries by circulation and comparing indices of circulation with percentages of book expenditures and the rank order of each, provides further statistical evidence for the same conclusion. A comparison of the 37 libraries in the highest fourth with the 37 libraries in the lowest fourth shows that the libraries with the highest circulation index (i.e., a larger increase in circulation) have a decidedly higher percentage of book expenditures than do those with the lowest circulation index. If a book-expenditure percentage of 15 is accepted as a minimum below which the proportion of book expenditures ought not to fall—a conclusion with which most public library administrators would probably agree—the table shows that only 8 libraries in the highest fourth fall below the 15 per cent norm, while in the lowest fourth 21 fall below the 15 per cent level. The result of the rank-order correlation for this table is a positive correlation of $+.40 \pm .048$.[19]

TABLE 19

CIRCULATION INDEX, HIGH AND 1935; BOOK PERCENTAGE, 1930–35; AND INDEX, 1935, BY REGION AND BY VOLUME SIZE

(Base Year, 1930=100)

	CIRCULATION INDEX		BOOK EXPENDITURES	
	Highest	1935	Percentage, 1930–35	Index, 1935
By region:				
New England	126(1933)	113	16.84	73
Middle Atlantic	122(1932)	103	12.87	53
Middle West	116(1932)	110	14.33	63
South	132(1932)	120	18.21	64
Pacific	125(1933)	112	16.85	46
By volume size:				
Under 10,000	137(1933)	125	17.62	65
10,000– 50,000	129(1933)	114	18.00	71
50,000–200,000	130(1933)	120	17.15	68
Above 200,000	117(1932)	98	13.53	60

It is not the intention of this discussion to insist that there should be a perfect correlation between increase in circulation and the proportion of a library's

[19] If the eight atypical cases omitted in the other correlations are omitted from this one, the answer is $+.50 \pm .044$.

expenditures for books. The correlation of +.40 does suggest a significant relationship between circulation and book expenditures. Unduly large increases in the book-expenditure ratio would not necessarily result in correspondingly large increases in the circulation. However, a library is not likely to maintain an increase in circulation unless it devotes a fair proportion of its income to the purchase of books.

DEPRESSION INFLUENCES

The preceding sections have noted certain relations between circulation and expenditures for the years 1930–35. We have now to note the interrelation of library and community from a description of the depression factors which may have effected changes in the library and its use. Causal relations cannot, of course, be established by the data. We can only indicate the relationships among which the causes are to be sought.

A description of the administration of a library unavoidably presents a picture of an institution which is operated independently for its own purposes. This is not a complete picture. Not only is the library supported by the community in which it operates, but its collection of reading materials is built up in response to the demands which develop with changing community activities, institutions, and attitudes. Certain of these factors are known to stimulate reading interest and library use—sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. In the following description of the community in depression will be included only those factors in the community which are known to have some relation to library use.

Wilson has shown that provision of library service varies with economic ability and that it also varies with "the service from schools, adult educational organizations, and other social and cultural institutions and media for the dissemination of ideas." Wilson is speaking of the provision of established library service; but it can be shown by his data that, where there is an increase in the provision of these services which provoke exchange of ideas, discussion, and reading, there is also an increase in library circulation.[20] In the description of the community in depression which follows, emphasis is placed on the changes which took place in those factors which affect library circulation.

Unemployment.—First place as a depression factor acting upon libraries must undoubtedly be assigned to the great increase in unemployment which occurred between 1930 and 1935. The stock-market crash in the fall of 1929 did not cause an immediate business and industrial slump. For a short while business held its breath. Retail sales began falling off in 1930. Sales of luxuries, replacements for durable goods, and such new durable goods as houses, furniture, and automobiles were restricted first and most severely. Next, expenditures for clothing were curtailed. A strict economy showed in the purchase of food, but sales were cut less than those for clothing. Sales of articles from the ten-cent store and sales of gasoline dropped least of all. About as many people as before used a car, but a great many more used the old car. Total retail sales for the United States were cut almost in half between 1930 and 1933.

In 1930 and 1931 business dragged and the businessman had many worries, but as a whole business jobs continued. Factory employment, however, fell off sharp-

[20] Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 267–321. Cf. summary as shown in Fig. 27 with summaries of chap. xi, "Public School"; chap. xii, "Adult Educational Agencies"; etc.

ly in 1930. Employment decreased more immediately in the durable-goods industries, and over the period of the depression employment in this group was reduced more than in the nondurable goods. Unemployment had increased from 1930, and in the period studied it was apparently most severe in the United States in 1932 and only slightly better in 1933. In these two years the earnings of those who were employed were also considerably reduced.[21]

Unemployment and reduced earnings both were factors which turned people toward the library. Figure 17 substantiates graphically the truth of this statement. The curve for employment is almost the exact reverse of the curve for library circulation. As employment declined, library circulation rose; and, as employment began to increase, circulation began to decrease. The library circulation peak in 1932–33 corresponds precisely to the employment trough in the same years. With more leisure time and less money to spend on other types of recreation, people spent more time in reading.

In 1934 there were approximately twenty million people unemployed, and in that same year there was an increase of 20 per cent in library borrowers over 1930—or, according to estimates of the American Library Association, a total number of twenty-six million registered library borrowers.[22] Probably large numbers of the new borrowers came from the ranks of the unemployed. One naturally would not expect that the entire unemployed group would be library users. Relief workers as a general rule show a lack of skill which necessarily makes them marginal workers in time of distress. Relief further demoralizes them. However, a large proportion of this unemployed group were between sixteen and twenty-five years, and these probably used the library considerably.

Other factors which contributed to increased demands upon libraries in the period were the changes in types and varieties of publications,[23] which added to the ease and interest of reading of all subject material. The library, of course, was only one agency for the distribution of reading material, and we are concerned to learn what changes took place in the other important agencies for distribution of print and ideas.

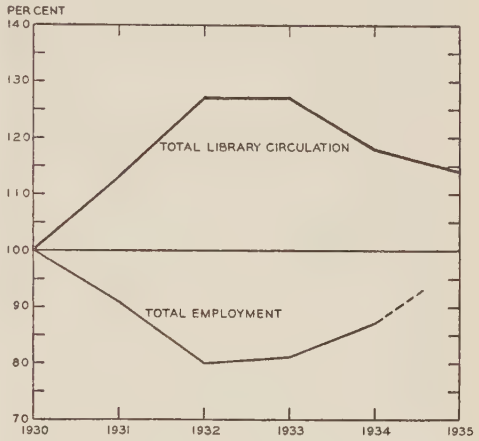

FIG. 17.—Total library circulation and total employment (base year, 1930=100). From schedules of public libraries and Robert F. Martin, *National Income and Its Elements* (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1936), Table 7, p. 23.

Book sales and rental libraries.—In depression the public, which for the book publisher means primarily the upper middle class, could not afford to buy books equal in quantity to the number being produced, and book production

[21] U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1935* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1936), p. 315, Table 348; p. 319, Table 352; p. 321, Table 355.

[22] "Contrasts in Library Service," *A.L.A. Bulletin*, XXIX (May, 1935), 249–55.

[23] Douglas Waples, *People and Print* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), pp. 161–63.

consequently declined.[24] The rental libraries increased their distributing units during the period between 200 and 300 per cent; but receipts, which increased until 1932–33, fell off afterward, although at a smaller rate than that at which they increased.[25]

The commercial book agencies, therefore, which in prosperous or normal times might be looked upon as rivals of the public library, were able to offer less competition during this period, principally because of the inability of their potential public to buy.

Radio.—The use of the radio increased over 170 per cent from 1930 to 1935. The increase was a steady one, but it was larger in 1931, 1932, and 1933 than in the following years.[26] Thus it is seen that the radio was being used increasingly in those same years in which the library was experiencing greater use. In the years 1934–35, when library use was declining, the radio was listened to by still more people than in previous years.

Did this increase in the use of the radio contribute to the decline in library circulation? Probably not to any considerable extent. As has been shown, the reduction in book expenditures by libraries could alone account for any decrease appearing in library circulation in 1935.

Paul F. Lazarsfeld's study, *Radio and the Printed Page*,[27] shows that factors of individual traits and interest which lead some to prefer reading to the radio, as a form for communication, persist in spite of radio progress.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 57–79.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[26] U.S. Bureau of Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Families;* and a survey made by Dr. David Starch for the Columbia Broadcasting Company, figures dated January 1, 1935 (mimeographed).

[27] (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1940), pp. 135–36, 320–31.

The radio and the moving picture as the two most popular forms of entertainment in the present period are naturally linked together as possible rival factors to library use.

Moving pictures.—It is difficult to know whether the greater use of free recreational facilities during the period was an indication of an urge similar to that which increased library circulation or whether library borrowers might have been increased by those who preferred reading to taking their recreation with the crowd. The inability of many to afford the movie, however, possibly contributed to increased reading of library books. Movie attendance fell off 32 per cent in 1931 and 45 per cent in 1932 and 1933.[28] Library circulation increased 13 per cent in 1931 and 27 per cent in 1932 and 1933 (Table 1).

Since the movie has become perfected, it is the favorite way for many people to secure their drama and vicarious thrills. Some of these people might otherwise be more frequent library borrowers. No doubt when they could ill afford the movies their use of the library increased library circulation somewhat.

In conclusion, it may be said that it is impossible to describe the effect on public libraries of many aspects of community life which are in some way concerned with reading and reading interests. The facts reported in this section, however, suggest some of the social and educational forces which greatly increased demands on the public library during the period 1930–35—demands which, unfortunately, the library could not supply.

One of the most important by-products of the depression, however, was the realization that education is the basis for

[28] Film Daily, *Yearbook of Motion Pictures* (New York: Film Daily, 1935), p. 39.

a safe and productive economic co-operation. The entire range of leisure-time activities were stimulated in this period. And the library was recognized by all groups as having a role in the programs of both education and recreation. Such a library, however, must be alive to the changing social values in government, in economics, and in cultural life.

ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS

The depression brought an abrupt check to a long and sustained period of expansion in public library service. Generally, throughout the twentieth century, public libraries maintained their relative financial status among other municipal departments.[29] Since this period was one of great expansion in municipal government, the library's rate of advance was correspondingly rapid. At first, when it appeared that the depression might be of short duration, libraries sought to meet the situation by temporary adjustments. Later, as the depression dragged on, it became apparent that more fundamental changes were necessary. Basic questions of library objectives, service policies, and administration forced themselves on the attention of library executives. In this concluding section consideration will be given to a number of problems of an administrative character which came to the fore during the depression. The treatment here does not pretend to be inclusive; the intent is merely to emphasize a few items for which the data presented in the study provide a relevant background.

Proportions of library expenditures.—A perennial administrative problem which assumed renewed importance during the depression period was that of the proportional distribution of the major categories of library expenditures—salaries, books, periodicals, and binding. Before the depression began, public librarians had reached a high degree of unanimity on the normal percentages to be assigned to these subdivisions of total expenditures. For larger libraries this norm might have been stated as the proportion 65:23:12,[30] and for medium-sized libraries, 54:26:20[31] (including expenditures for periodicals and binding with books), the figures indicating percentages for salaries, books, and miscellaneous expenditures in that order. But, as we have seen, the depression was responsible for decided changes in those ratios (Table 12).

The findings of this study seem to afford strong support for the conclusion that a well-proportioned library budget is essential to satisfactory library operation and, in particular, to the maintenance of circulation levels. It has been shown that during the depression period there was a significant correlation between circulation increases and the maintenance of an adequate ratio of book expenditures. Circulation increases were greater, as Table 20 shows, in the three smaller size groups than in the group of large libraries of over 200,000 volumes, and the proportion of book expenditures is also correspondingly greater in the three smaller groups.

It seems evident that relative cuts in book and salary expenditures during depression were determined partly by the size of the library and the rigidity of the budget. Nevertheless, the libraries which

[29] Cf. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Financial Statistics of Cities.*

[30] Joeckel and Carnovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

[31] This is the proportion for the 30 libraries of 50,000–200,000 volumes in the sample of 150. It is easily recognized as approximating the proportion proposed by the A.L.A.—55:25:20—in "Standards of Public Libraries," *A.L.A. Bulletin*, XXVII (1933), 514. A similar one is also given in C. E. Sherman, "The Library Budget," *Current Problems in Public Library Finance*, ed. Carl Vitz (Chicago: American Library Association, 1933), p. 51.

TABLE 20

FOUR VOLUME-SIZE GROUPS SHOWING CIRCULATION AND EXPENDITURE INDICES AND BOOK, PERIODICAL, AND BINDING PERCENTAGES FOR 1930–35

YEAR	CIRCULATION INDEX	EXPENDITURE INDEX	BOOK PERCENTAGE	PERIODICAL PERCENTAGE	BINDING PERCENTAGE
	Under 10,000 Volumes				
1930	100	100	22.58	2.79	2.40
1931	114	97	18.30	3.48	2.05
1932	133	86	16.36	2.91	1.76
1933	137	80	16.16	2.87	2.14
1934	127	84	14.34	2.62	2.34
1935	125	81	17.99	3.02	2.17
	10,000–50,000 Volumes				
1930	100	100	20.91	1.97	3.25
1931	114	101	20.05	2.02	3.41
1932	126	88	17.33	2.03	3.11
1933	129	77	14.75	2.23	3.27
1934	119	79	16.74	2.18	3.50
1935	114	81	18.29	2.26	3.28
	50,000–200,000 Volumes				
1930	100	100	20.21	1.70	3.73
1931	114	102	19.83	1.72	3.90
1932	130	94	17.08	1.78	3.82
1933	130	82	14.61	1.76	3.91
1934	123	82	15.42	1.93	4.07
1935	120	87	15.74	1.84	4.33
	Over 200,000 Volumes				
1930	100	100	15.35	1.08	5.44
1931	109	102	15.47	1.06	5.29
1932	117	89	10.96	0.89	5.02
1933	109	80	8.37	0.92	4.93
1934	103	79	9.89	0.90	5.18
1935	98	83	11.10	0.93	5.19

reduced their different expenditures proportionately seem to have suffered smaller losses in circulation.[32] This suggests that possibly the greater relative reduction of book expenditures in some libraries indicates a different attitude on the part of the administrator as to the relative importance of book stock and staff to the service of the library.

The data show that the generally accepted proportions of library budgets in predepression days were at least reasonably satisfactory, and those proportions for books should be at least maintained in the future. One of the most important causes of the inability of the public library to take advantage of its opportunities during the depression was the distorted proportions which characterized library expenditures during the period, which meant, in most cases, book expenditures too low to supply the demand. And, if the demand is not reasonably well supplied, circulation will decline.

A striking example of the point is the experience of the Chicago Public Library. As shown in Table 21, the index of total expenditures for the Chicago Public Library in 1935 was 78. The book-expenditures index was 93; but for the three years previous it had been from 8 to 22, and the percentage of total expenditures allocated to books had varied in 1930–35 from 0.89 per cent to 11.72 per cent. These are percentages which, it has been shown, are too low to support circulation, and the very severe decline in circulation in Chicago was the inevitable result.[33] The lesson for the librarian plainly is that expenditures for books should increase as service increases.[34]

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[32] Circulation has been taken as a measure of library service because circulation records are the only records of the service of the library sufficiently standardized to use for comparisons. This fact does not include the implication that circulation of books is the most important service of the library.

[33] Joeckel and Carnovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–12.

[34] This does not mean, of course, that expenditures for books should be increased at the expense of those for salaries where a normal proportion has already been established by the library.

Diminished proportion of service to children.—Another problem of proportion in library service began to assume somewhat more definite form during the depression period. As yet its outlines are vague, and many librarians would vigorously deny that it is a problem or ever will be one. Yet the fact remains that during the period of the depression it became evident that the existing ratios between library service to children and to adults were changing. It has been shown that, while adult circulation generally increased during the depression period, children's circulation generally decreased (Table 2). Service to children has always been an essential part of public library service, and any shift in its relative importance is bound to be significant.

Two facts have contributed to this situation. One is that the absolute number of children in the population is declining and the relative proportion of adults is therefore increasing noticeably. The second fact is that elementary and secondary libraries increased greatly in number and service during the depression period. The number of libraries in separately housed public high schools increased 11 per cent during the period, and the average number of volumes per library increased 14 per cent.[35]

With the adult portion of the community increasing and with adult education also growing in importance, it is inevitable that public library administrators will be forced to consider seriously changes in the amount of service provided for adult and for juvenile groups. Moreover, there is to be considered the rapid emergence of a roughly parallel system of service to children and youth—the school library. Conceivably, sweeping changes in the organization of library service to youth will result from this new situation. It is significant to note that the librarians of two large public libraries have recently openly posed the question of whether the public library should not abandon the juvenile field to the school library.[36] While such a drastic revision of public library policy as this is unlikely to come rapidly, it seems possible to predict that public libraries may tend to restrict in various ways the amount of their children's work, leaving more of this service to the school libraries. Boards of trustees and librarians are likely to be confronted with this question more frequently in the future.

TABLE 21

CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY CIRCULATION, EXPENDITURE, SALARY, AND BOOK INDICES AND BOOK PERCENTAGES, 1930–35

(Base Year, 1930 = 100)

Year	Circulation Index	Expenditure Index	Salary Index	Book Index	Book Percentage
1930	100	100	100	100	8.98
1931	114	105	105	138	11.72
1932	112	82	69	8	0.89
1933	94	78	67	22	1.50
1934	79	74	63	22	2.64
1935	73	78	64	93	10.68
Averages	82	86	78	64	6.07

Development of co-operative services.—During the period covered by this study, 1930–35, there were the beginnings of an important co-operative development in public library service to large rural areas. Public libraries have long existed in

[35] U.S. Bureau of Education, *Biennial Survey of Education, 1928–30* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933), chap. ii, pp. 776–77, Table 52; *ibid., 1932–34*, chap. v, p. 75, Table 53.

[36] Ralph Munn, "Fact Versus Folklore," *A.L.A. Bulletin*, XXXIV (June, 1940), 381; Nell Avery Unger, "Shall We Surrender?" *Institute on Library Work with Children: Proceedings* (School of Librarianship, University of California, 1939), pp. 32–44.

many rural areas but have not always succeeded in giving adequate service. With the development of the new pattern of Agriculture Extension Service during the depression and the regional administration of the Emergency Education Program, there also developed a new pattern of library service in rural areas. This development was especially evident in the South, where the Emergency Education Program was most successful and where there was relatively little established library service. In some states the statewide service was provided through the co-operation of existing libraries, the Work Projects Administration, and the National Youth Administration, the whole administered under trained librarians but using many workers from the above-named relief organizations as well as volunteer workers.[37] We also find the school library serving increasingly as a branch to the public library. In the development of these services to larger areas which Joeckel describes in *Library Service*,[38] the trade centers set the pattern for the development. The Agriculture Extension Service had already given an example for the establishment of service by demonstration. And the rural attitude at this time, particularly in the South, was receptive to new programs not standardized, if there was profit to the community.

CONCLUSION

This record of the public library in depression has been almost wholly statistical. The high peaks of circulation during the period, however, suggest that library service during the depression was eagerly sought. Likewise, no attempt could be made to tell the story of conscientious public service given by the staffs of the great majority of American public libraries during the difficult days and years of the depression. The 150 libraries of which this study was made are merely names, scattered from Maine to California. But taken together they constitute an important record of work sympathetically done, which contributed something to the lessening of social ills during a difficult period.

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[37] U.S. Works Progress Administration of Arkansas, "Library Projects: Annual Report, 1936" (mimeographed).

[38] Prepared for the Advisory Committee on Education (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), pp. 58–61. Wilson also takes note of this type of library expansion in the South in "Optima in Library Service for the South by 1950," in Harry Miller Lydenberg and Andrew Keogh (eds.), *William Warner Bishop: A Tribute* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), pp. 186–204.